

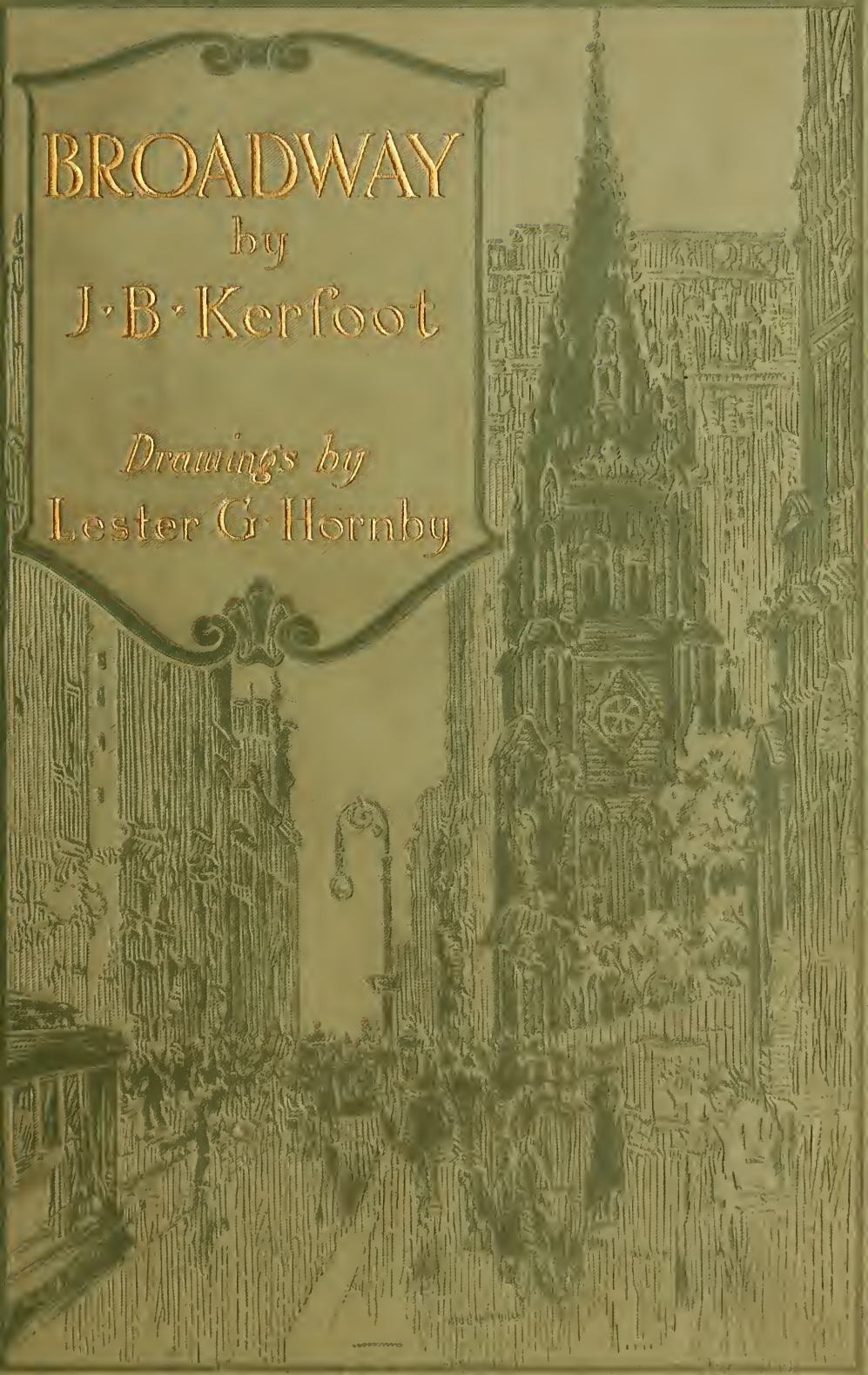
BROADWAY

by

J. B. Kerfoot

Drawings by

Lester G. Hornby





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Book 167

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A Broadway Restaurant after the Theatre

BROADWAY





Trinity Church



21

BROADWAY

BY

J. B. Kerfoot

DRAWINGS BY

LESTER G. HORNBY



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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From drawings by Lester G. Hornby

A Hansom, Union Square

I



BROADWAY

I

I WAS leaning, one afternoon, on the stone rail of the promenade-deck affair that surrounds the fifty-second story of one of the downtown office-towers, looking dreamily down into the chasm of Broadway — that long narrow cleft in the plateau of skyscraper roofs that forms the Grand Cañon of lower Manhattan. And as I watched the sluggish stream of life that filled the far bottom of the gorge, a man alongside of me volunteered a remark.

“Gee!” he said, “they look like ants, don’t they?”

Now this was, or at least it had every out-

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ward appearance of being, an utterly harmless observation. I dare say, indeed, that had I noticed him standing there or seen that he was approaching the conversational boiling-point, I could have predicted it. But I was day-dreaming, and so, momentarily, in that condition of mental flaccidity in which an idea, like a microbe, can find lodgment in one's psychological system and work unhindered havoc there. And no sooner had the word "ants" left my unnoticed neighbor's lips than I found myself twelve years and twelve thousand miles away, sitting on the broad and shaded porch of a squat inn in the mountains of Java, watching a long thin line of ascending and descending insects that stretched from the stone floor, diagonally across the stuccoed wall to a crack above a door. The line was a dozen feet long and in width perhaps a

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quarter of an inch. It was black with ants. From dawn to dark there was never a break in the toiling procession. And although by night (more than once I had brought my bedroom candle out to see) there was nothing doing in the ant world and no dimmest mark to distinguish their beaten road from the blank wall, by day there seemed never a change in the uncharted route the procession followed, and no stress of numbers, no congestion of traffic, ever forced the travelers on that crooked and curving highway to take to the adjacent fields. It, too, might have been a street lined with skyscrapers.

But the amazing part of the spectacle, the fantastic, grotesque, nightmarish aspect of the thing, upon which this microbe of an idea fastened and began to breed, was this : the road that these thronging insects traveled was so

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narrow that every outgoing ant necessarily came within touching distance of every home-comer; and every meeting resulted in a challenge. The individuals composing the host moved by jerks. Two steps and a challenge — three steps and another challenge — one step and another challenge. And all challenges were conducted under parliamentary rules. Two ants stopped, head on. They solemnly rubbed antennæ. They paused to consider the results. Then they side-stepped with a sort of hurried dignity and moved on to the next meeting.

The thing had fascinated me at the time. I had spent hours that were meant for siesta in watching the show. I had held a watch on one returning member of the colony and had found that it took him some eleven minutes to cover the twelve feet of highway and that

Broadway from Bowling Green



BROADWAY

he held over two hundred interviews on the way. I had racked my brain to discover whether it was social curiosity, or business interests, or military precaution, that impelled them to the performance; whether it was gossip, or instructions, or countersigns that they exchanged at those palpitating confabs. And then I had gone away and forgotten it all.

And now, at a chance word from an unnoticed stranger, it all came back to me and the old fascination began to breed a new fantasy. There, five hundred feet below me, stretched that other long thin line that was Broadway. From dawn till dark — and after — it, too, was lined with ascending and descending insects. What if, just once, one were to make the long journey up that crooked and curving highway, challenging every hu-

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man ant one met, stopping him, rubbing antennæ with him, sensing the sources he derived from, the ends he aimed at, the instincts he obeyed, the facts he blinked, the illusions he hugged, — getting, in short, the essence of his errand? Suppose one covered the dozen miles in eleven days and held two hundred thousand interviews by the way? Suppose, when one reached the heights of Harlem, one sat down and took stock of what one had learned? Suppose — I was, I think, a trifle drunk from the fumes of the imagined adventure. I forgot the man who had spoken to me. I entered the elevator, exploiting the vision, and reached the sidewalk still wrapped in dreams. The human ants were out in force. A score of them were bearing down on me. I laid my hand on the arm of the first of them.

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“Sir,” I said, “are you a native of this ant-hill?”

.

I never pursued the adventure in its originally projected form. But ever since that afternoon's awakening, when I've walked Broadway, it has been with antennæ extended.

"Hoki-Poki Men," Union Square

II



II

THERE is nothing in the world so universal, so potent, so impossible to disregard, and so difficult to define as personality.

The dictionary — that brazenly impudent beggar of pertinent questions — assures us that it is “the attributes, taken collectively, that make up the character and nature of an individual.” But, as usual, we know better than the dictionary; although, also as usual, we should get into hopeless difficulties if we tried to prove it. For the dictionary is a kind of cuttlefish, which, when closely pressed, emits an inky cloud of impenetrable verbiage, under cover of which it complacently returns to its original position. However, we must not be too hard on the poor dictionary; for it not only

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carries on an enormous business on a hopelessly inadequate capital, but having assumed the frightful responsibility of being omniscient it cannot afford to take chances.

But personality is not a sum in arithmetic. It is something much more closely resembling a phenomenon in physics.

If we are introduced to a man on the street-corner, the first thing that we are aware of in regard to him is what, for want of a better expression, we may call the impact of his personality. And though we may never see him again, and may forget his face and his name and the circumstances of the encounter, it is quite possible that the inarticulable impression of that mysterious emanation may be recoverable in our consciousness for years. He may have been a horse-thief and a wife-beater, a liar, a bunco-man, and an oppressor of the

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fatherless. Yet either the sum total of these things must be able, on occasion, to coalesce into an attractive and projectable essence, or else the personality that we recall with pleasure was something independent of their synthesis.

Moreover, personality is not confined to what, in ordinary weekday English, we are used to calling "individuals." Animals possess it. Trees, in a green, vegetable way, are endowed with it. Mountains have it. Certainly no wanderer among the cities will dream of denying their possession of the gift; and he is but an insensitive plodder along the sidewalks of life who is not conscious that one street differs from another street in personality as one star differs from another star in glory.

But personalities — especially those of streets — are kittle-cattle. They are at once

BROADWAY

saucy and elusive. They elbow us at crossings. They grin up at us from the cobbles. They laugh down at us from the sky-signs. They beckon us from the thick of the traffic, and pretend to take shelter in the shadows of doorways. They sometimes twiddle tantalizing thumbs at us from the eyes of urchins and again appear to perch perkily upon the shoulders of policemen. But when we have painstakingly beaten the bush of all these coverts, they are not there.

They are, in sober truth, abstractions ; and after the manner of their kind, they presume upon their advantages. One would need the brazen self-confidence of the dictionary itself to think that one could walk boldly up to one of these radiant intangibilities, throw a cunning noose of words over its head, lead it triumphantly home, and exhibit it as a trophy

Entrance to the Old Astor House



BROADWAY

of the chase. And yet in all the realm of sport there is no more alluring game than hunting them.

Only (and as we are going hunting together the point cannot be too carefully emphasized) the necessary tactics are a trifle odd. One can neither stalk a personality nor (a method sometimes only too successful with lions) induce one to stalk us. Stealth is wasted and strategy is of no avail. Much less is it possible by sustained pursuit to bring such a quarry to bay. It is only by being both careless and careful; by always going loaded, yet never carrying a gun; by often seeming mad as any hatter, yet always hiding a bit of method in our noddles; by loitering purposively in unlikely places in a mood happy-go-luckily compounded of opportunism and haphazardness; by never, even for a

BROADWAY

moment, forgetting what we are after and seldom, even to ourselves, acknowledging what we are doing, that we can hope — but let us get on the ground.

Up Broadway from 22d Street

III



III

SOMEWHERE along back in fifteen hundred and fifty odd, a globe-trotting burgher from that watertight compartment in the North Sea which is known as Holland brought some tulip seeds home with him from Constantinople, and thereby earned the right, although his name has been forgotten and no tablet to his memory will ever be erected by any American society of Holland dames, to figure as the authentic forefather of Broadway.

For those few tulip seeds (one imagines them sharing the capacious pockets of his square-tailed coat with a Turkish phrase-book and a flask of hollands) in due time became tulips. And these, having gladdened

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the eyes of our traveler's fellow countrymen, bred other tulips. And these not only bred others still, but went intoxicatingly to the heads of a people whom no amount of schnapps had ever thus affected. So that soon there was no square-tailed coat in all the Low Countries so poor that its pockets held no seeds. And before long about half of the bottom of that watertight compartment was sown to tulips. And the exchanges took to listing new varieties of that watered stock. And men speculated on margin in October bulbs and sold March tulips short. And finally, what with tending red and yellow tulips by day and dreaming of blue ones by night, the very noses of the nation took on a flowery hue, and throughout Europe a Dutchman was recognizable by his bulbous build.

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And thus it came about that when, in 1626, the Dutch East India Company sent Peter Minuit out to establish the trading-post of New Amsterdam, it was less of set purpose than by a sort of racial instinct that, just behind the rear gate of his little fort, he planted the unconsidered bulb of Bowling Green from which has sprung the amazing stalk, Broadway.

Good old Peter! He wore, one likes to think, a leathern belt some cubits in circumference, with several snickersnees stuck in it; and beneath the brim of his imposing hat there dwelt a pair of eyes that knew a bargain when they saw one. But when (doubtless protesting that the natives were bankrupting him by their rapacity) he paid over his sixty guilders worth of jimcracks and took the title-deeds to Manhattan Island, he little

BROADWAY

suspected the fertility of that rocky soil or guessed what a Jack-and-the-beanstalky plant was destined to take root in his back yard. And while the plant has grown beyond calculation, and bears flowers and fruit that the wisest Burbank in all Amsterdam would never have dared prophesy, we have only to look down from the windows of any of the modern skyscrapers that hem it in, to see that there, at the base of all the fevered activity and plodding hopelessness and gay unconcern of its long, twisted, and knotted stem, that little bulb still quiescently reposes in simple symmetry and vegetating calm.

It is, I think, the quietest spot in all New York, and the most restful — once you have gotten into its good graces. But it is not — like some of the wistfully reminiscent, shabby-genteel, manifestly come-down-in-the-world

Broadway from Park Row



BROADWAY

little squares that are to be met with here and there in the city — easy to get acquainted with.

Some of these fairly beg you to come and sit with them. And when, from sheer pity or out of passing curiosity, you linger for a moment on their warped benches or lean against their rusty fences, they whisper to you that it seems like old times to see an American face again, and that as for gloves and a walking-stick, — why, dear, dear, they remember, years ago, — and they confidentially point out doorways whose colonial fan-lights now hang askew and whose slender pilastered frames are smirched and broken ; and they croon in the ear of your imagination about chignons and cashmere shawls and black stocks and crinolines and the vanished world that once — before Ireland began to empty or

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Italy to unite and when Lithuania was but a name — came and went and lingered decorously of balmy evenings along the path where that little Dago girl with the bright eyes and the dirty face is now minding the baby.

But it is not thus with Bowling Green. Shabby it may be and somewhat out at elbows ; but neither wistfulness nor an appeal for sympathy are to be detected in its bearing. If there are any advances to be made, they 'll come from you. And be very sure that it has its own way of dealing with people that carry guidebooks and stare open-mouthed at its one rakish sycamore tree and its fishless fishpool and ask suspicious questions of it with an air of being antiquarians. It answers them not at all. Or, worse still, it grumbles noisy insults at them in its deep subway voice and clangs its circling cable-gongs in their ears, and bids

Lower Broadway from City Hall Park



BROADWAY

them read the grandiloquent inscription on the base of its De Peyster statue and begone about their business. Some day, if you feel in a sardonic mood, go down and watch the expressions on their baffled faces.

But if you are one of those to whom this little parklet's immersion in turmoil only serves, in certain moods, to enhance its aloofness, then to you, when it has come to know you, it will offer an isle of refuge, a place of withdrawal and of self-communing, a sort of sanctuary of silence in a war of sound. For you, too, bit by grudging bit, it will consent to reveal its secrets. And for those whom it thus favors it keeps a special bench (it stands just behind the news-stand by the subway entrance), from which, without losing sight of the bit of magic sky reflected in the fountain basin, they can just manage to look around

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the corner of the hill into the defile of Broadway. And sometimes, as they look, they will find the clamor of the surrounding streets withdraw itself from hearing and become but the rumble of the present echoing back into the silence of its source. And then, by a mere half-turn of the mind's eye, they will find the past close beside them.

Let us sit there for a moment. For even on Broadway the past has some significance.

We are apt, when we think at all of the early Dutch village of New Amsterdam, to think of it as sitting squatly and peak-roofedly on the tip of the island, with its back to the bay and its whitewashed face turned expectantly toward the future city. But of course, as a matter of fact, it did nothing of the sort. It faced the shore and gave only so much heed to the hinterland of swamp and hill behind it as to

In the Wholesale District, below Union Square



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bethink it of building a palisade at its back, in order that it might sleep undisturbed by fear of raids organized in the woods that are Wall Street. For even in 1626 the idea of selling a property to outsiders and then freezing out the new management, having a receiver appointed and effecting a reorganization, was not unknown in these latitudes.

Outside this first palisade and at the foot of the hill that still slopes up from Bowling Green lay an open space that was called "The Plain." I have called it Peter Minuit's back yard. It could not, however, even aspire to that reflected dignity; for it was the place where, had the early seventeenth century afforded such commodities, the empty cans and discarded woven-wire mattresses of the community would have been bestowed; and it was not until the little town, spreading

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back from the harbor at the foot of Broad Street, had scattered a few shanties along the eastern side of this Common, and the new fort of 1635 had given a touch of fashion to its southern edge, that the most imaginative optimist in the garrison began to see any possibilities in it. Then — first indication of the boom to be — a grant was made to Burgomaster Martin Cregier of “land for a house and garden lying north of the fort.” But even so, Martin waited seventeen years before he built. And then — “The Plain” having in the mean time become “The Market Field,” and Martin having doubtless interviewed the plain clothes representative of the Man across the Way — the Burgomaster built, not a “house and garden,” but a tavern.

Perhaps the Governor, playing bowls on his newly graded lawn behind the new fort,

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took to dropping in on Martin between games. Presumably the court followed his example. At any rate, the Burgomaster soon came to be recognized as the Delmonico of his day; and it was not long before, if you had asked him, he would have told you that his tavern stood at the beginning of De Heere Straat—the Great Highway.

The bulb had sprouted.

In Madison Square

IV



IV

THERE is always a certain temptation to the biographer to multiply anecdotes of his hero's childhood.

It would be pleasant to sit at ease in Bowling Green and recall the divine naïveté of an infantile Broadway that could still pride itself, as late as 1737, upon its business sagacity in getting four hundred and seventy-five dollars for the corner of Exchange Place.

It would be interesting to note and to speculate upon the tavernly tenacity of Meinherr Cregier's freehold, whereon the King's Arms succeeded the original establishment; which in its turn became Burns's Coffee House; which same, after seeing many sights and passing under many aliases, was still in evidence as the Atlantic Garden as late as 1860.

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It would be entertaining to disentangle the threads of the Aneke Jans affair, and see how a worthy dame of early New Amsterdam, by marrying two husbands and a riverside plantation, became, if there is any truth in affidavits, the ancestress of about ten per cent of the population of America; bequeathed to her descendants, share and share alike, in fee-simple and in perpetuity, an undivided interest in an imaginary claim against Trinity Parish; and thus not only put hope into thousands of the hopeless, even to this day, but furnished lucrative employment for the lawyers of ten generations.

We might even manage (a thing to which the best of us are not averse) to discover one of those quietly ironic jokes that Fate seems to be so fond of perpetrating, apparently for her own exclusive enjoyment. Do you see

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that towering pile of steel and stone at 26 Broadway? It is the home of the Standard Oil. It is the centre of the web. It is the point of vantage upon which, for so many years, a gaunt old spider of finance stood, benignly somnolent, yet always ready (after the immemorial manner of spiders) so violently to shake his taut fabric of silky threads that no attorney-general of them all could either make out the design of their construction or put his finger on the spider. Yet once, modestly displayed on the lower right-hand corner of a visiting-card, the number 26 Broadway revealed the place where Alexander Hamilton lay awake at night excogitating the fiscal policy of a new Republic, and never seeing, for all his sagacity, a warning in the symbolic fact that the oil in his midnight lamp was furnished by a whale.

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But our business with the past is not of this gossip and hobnobbish nature. We are come to interview it, not to visit it. We have called it up, not to listen to its reminiscences, but to ask it a question.

Broadway, even to an unfamiliar and casual visitor, is amazingly abrupt and apparently arbitrary in its transitions. It never seems to alter by degrees, but always to change by jerks. One section of it never seems to melt into another section, but always to flounce into it. Those of us, too, who have known it long realize that though it sometimes alters, almost overnight, the whole character and contents of one of these divisions, it is unalterably persistent in retaining its lines of transitional demarcation. We are come to ask the past to tell us why.

Again Broadway, even to the senses of the

Grace Church



BROADWAY

same unfamiliar and casual visitor, differs from the other streets and avenues of New York in something beside its greater length, its more varied life, and the larger number of its tall buildings and electric lights. It differs, too, quite as manifestly from the chief thoroughfares of all other American cities, and the difference is equally unstateable in terms of statistics. We are come to the past to ask if it can give us any clue to the nature of this difference. Let us see what it has to say.

In Martin Cregier's day De Heere Straat ran to the new palisade that the growing town had built in 1653 on the line of Wall Street. Beyond the gates and as far as what is now Park Row it was also a traveled road and was known as De Heere Wegh. But there, instead of showing any sign of pushing on into the country on the line of its future course,

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it ended abruptly at the new Common (or "The Fields," as the some-day-to-be City Hall Park was at first called), and turned its scanty traffic over to the Bowery Lane. It had come up like a weed, no man foreseeing it. It grew like a weed, no man tending it. And to all contemporary appearances it stopped like a weed when it had got its growth.

New Amsterdam became New York. New York, for a few months, changed hands and name again and became New Orange. Once more, and this time for good, the city took its present name. And still no one seemed to dream but that the stretch of highway that had come to be called Broadway was complete as it stood. Indeed, so firmly was this notion fixed in the public mind that when, in 1760, the city fathers laid out what is now Broadway between Vesey and Duane Streets,

Broadway at Union Square



BROADWAY

the extension was not even recognized for what it was, but was called Great George Street. And it was only when the Revolution was over and house-cleaning patriots were busy changing "Crown" Street to "Liberty" and "King" Street to "Pine," that it occurred to some one that "Great George" Street — objectionable name — might be gotten rid of by calling it Broadway.

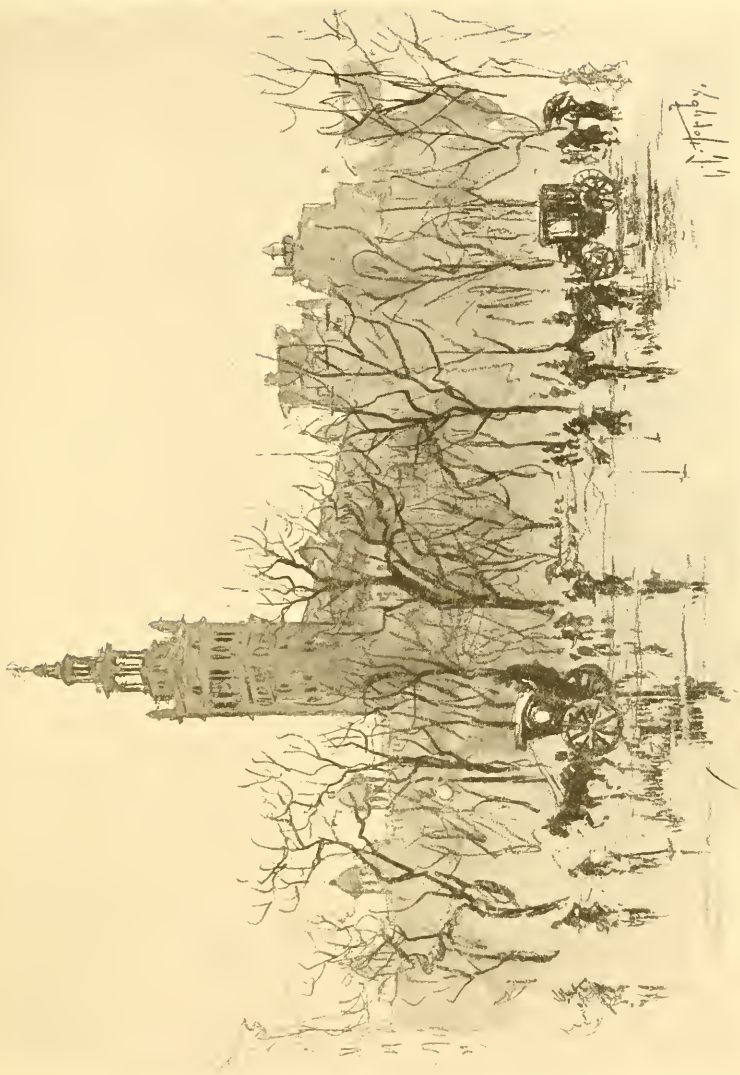
But even this does not seem to have disturbed in the least the public's conviction that Broadway was not a growing organism, but a given quantity. Great George Street, during the thirty years following its christening, had, with some pauses for breath, laboriously climbed the hill, to the north of which, and on the present line of Canal Street, a little stream crossed from the Collect Pond to the Lispenard Meadows and the Hudson

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River. During the Revolution the British had built a stone bridge across this creek to connect the fortifications they had thrown up on the hills at both sides of it. And now, taking quick advantage of this convenience, Broadway was soon stretching out toward a sandy lane that ran from the little settlement at the head of the Bowery to Greenwich Village—the present Astor Place. But did anybody recognize it? Not a soul. It was known, even officially, as “The Middle Road.” And it was not till the beginning of the nineteenth century that it seems to have been generally realized that the street which ended against the fence of the Sailors’ Snug Harbor grounds was Broadway, now finally after many years arrived at its full growth. The weed had stolen another march on the gardeners.

But now a somewhat noteworthy event

A Rainy Evening — Madison Square



BROADWAY

occurred. People had for some time been talking of the advisability of mapping out the whole upper part of Manhattan Island, so that, as the city grew northward, there would be a predetermined and symmetrical plan for development to follow. In 1807 a commission was appointed to give this idea effect, and in 1820 they submitted a plan, which was approved and which has been pretty closely adhered to. But first a bit of preliminary clearing-up was undertaken. The gardeners became suspicious of the weed and determined to cut off its head.

The oldest, and indeed for long years the only, thoroughfare leading from early New York to the outer world was the Bowery-Bloomingdale-Eastern Post Road. It was to this highway that the traffic of De Heere Wegh had been diverted when the latter

BROADWAY

stopped at "The Fields." It was to this highway that the traffic of "The Middle Road" was turned over through the lane at Astor Place. It was into this ancient and honorable highway that it was now proposed to lead Broadway and so get rid of it forever. A way was opened for it through the property of the Sailors' Snug Harbor Foundation. A twist was given it at what is now the intersection of Tenth Street, and it was headed for the Bloomingdale Road at about Sixteenth Street and the matter dismissed as settled.

But, as we have had occasion to see in our own day, Broadway is a plant that refuses to be topped. New York awoke one morning along in the thirties and discovered that the Bloomingdale Road had disappeared and that Broadway bloomed in its stead. And with the complacent acceptance of the accomplished,

The "Flatiron" Building, Broadway, at Fifth Avenue



BROADWAY

and the refusal to learn from past misjudgments, that have always characterized New York's attitude toward this most self-willed of its creatures, it was immediately seen that Broadway naturally and inevitably ran to Fifty-ninth Street and also that it naturally and finally ended there.

The matter touches our own times. It is only a year or so ago that we saw Eighth Avenue run into Columbus Circle from the south and run out of it toward the north; saw Fifty-ninth Street run into it from the east and out of it toward the west; saw Broadway run into it cat-a-corner and the Boulevard run out of it askew; — and drew no inferences. Yet how self-evident the truth became when the signs were changed on the lamp-posts! And if to-day you will examine a map of the Greater City you will see where

BROADWAY

Broadway, the last vestige of its Fabian policy thrown aside, has literally knocked St. Nicholas Avenue to one side, stolen its right of way, gobbled the poor old King's Bridge Road (which the house-cleaning patriots of '94 forgot to rechristen), and thus for the first time under its own name has made its way into the open. They say it ends at Albany.

And now that we have run our fingers down the index of history, let us see if we can find an answer to our questions.

For one thing, it is fairly evident why, even to-day, De Heere Straat is dimly differentiable from De Heere Wegh. Also why Great George Street has something more than its habit of dealing in typewriters and sporting-goods to mark it off from those sections of the lower street that had a hundred

Along by Martin's



BROADWAY

years the start of it. Also that the sudden sense of having reached the New Jerusalem, which one is conscious of when one walks north across Canal Street, may owe its suddenness less to the sharply drawn clannishness of race than to the persisting tradition that the Middle Road was an independent entity. And it is perhaps little to be wondered at that this habit of developing by sections has been maintained when we see how conveniently the stretches from Astor Place to Union Square, from Seventeenth Street to Twenty-third, from Twenty-third Street to Thirty-fourth, from Thirty-fourth Street to Forty-second, and from Forty-second Street to the Circle have lent themselves to its continuance.

As for the other question, if history does not answer it categorically, it at least hints

BROADWAY

at its solution. We were “warm,” as the children say, when we likened Broadway to a weed in a garden; for it is evidently in spite of the gardeners and not through their care that Broadway has grown up and come into its own. Fifth Avenue was planted. Broadway “just grewed.” But we should be warmer yet, I fancy, if we likened the difference between Broadway and other thoroughfares to that difference — not at all one of degree and yet not flatfootedly one of kind — that subsists between the domesticated duck and the canvasback; or, better still, to that between the pedigreed cat on the hearth and its striped relative in the jungle. Pennsylvania Avenue and Halsted Street are by Geometry out of Foresight. Broadway is *feræ naturæ*.

That is why, from no matter what cross-street you emerge on no matter what part of

BROADWAY

its course, some dim ancestral instinct in you stirs as though it recognized its enemy or its prey. If you come of the timid tribes, — if your totem is the hare or the horse, — you tremble imperceptibly, like your prototypes at the track of a bear. If you come of tougher breed, — if the boar hound is the sign of your house, — the hackles of your mind make ready to bristle.

It is the taint of the untamed.

Just above Columbus Circle

V



V

IN the last analysis I suppose that we are all either statisticians or impressionists.

Half of us, when face to face with a phenomenon, ask that the counting-machines of our minds be furnished with items to add. The rest of us seek a symbol to prime the pumps of our imaginations.

Personally, I am free to confess that the most incalculable orgies of calculation are useless for the purpose of arriving at an answer to the lower reaches of Broadway. The average of millionaires to the acre; the price of land per square foot; the number of stories in the latest tower; the population of the largest office building; the distance that the steel girders of the district would stretch,

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end to end, toward the moon ; — are all equally amazing and equally meaningless to me. Like Alice, who could n't tell the Red Queen how much one and one and one and one and one made, I cannot do addition. I cannot even do differential calculus. I think that I must be an impressionist.

At any rate, it was by accident that I first stumbled upon one of the guarded secrets of Lower Broadway — a place that I had long accepted as merely the central passage of the financial hive, banked on both sides by serried ranks of cells where golden honey was stored, and busy workers, to the humming of a million telephones and the buzzing of ten thousand tickers, fed baby Trusts on yellow pollen.

Like other would-be wise men who like to tickle their own fancies by playing hide-

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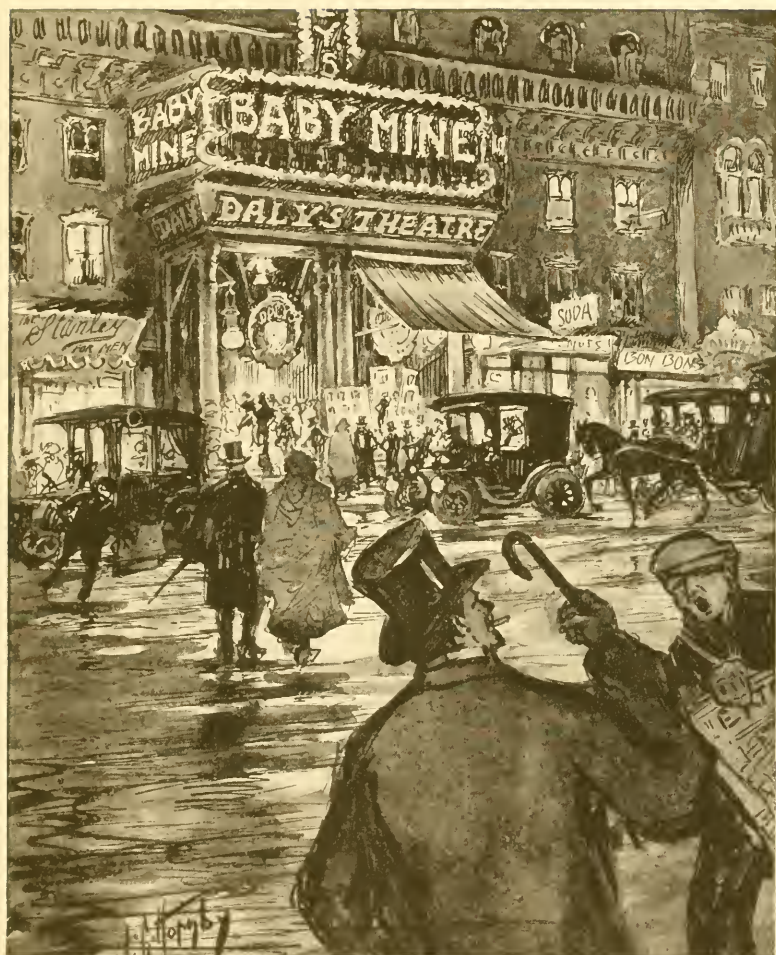
and-see with ironies, and think to catch that shy bird that we call the Trend of the Times by putting a pinch of salt on its tail, I had more than once (remembering that from the forgotten epochs at the back of beyond men have always expressed their aspirations by the spires that they built) nodded my head sagely on seeing from the Jersey shore or from the decks of ferries, how rapidly the modest steeples of an earlier ideal were disappearing behind the tower of the Sewing Machine, the white pharos of Life Insurance, the battlements of "City Investments" and of "Syndicate." I had even thought to have caught Fate once more at her practical joking at that spot, halfway between Bowling Green and the City Hall, where from the bottom of a square opening some hundreds of feet in depth Old Trinity (like Truth from the bot-

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tom of her well) points an ineffectual finger at a forgotten heaven. And when I made pilgrimage (as who that loves beauty and hopes to die does not) to her little city of the dead, I sometimes remembered that once a year, when darkness lends her a false horizon, and silence and a glint of snow among the graves conspire to hide the existence of the actual, a few men with memories and many more with tin horns gather to hear her chimes (that were cast to ring out the keynote of eternity) play guard-mount for the years. For the rest, they tell time for Wall Street.

But one day I happened to miss an early train at a downtown ferry, and so, by way of killing time, wandered at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning up the river to the crest of the Island and found, to my absurd surprise, that Broadway was tenantless.

At Daly's



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I once blundered into the abandoned bed of a Western river ; a deep, dim gorge which, in the long ago, it had washed and swirled and sucked and scoured among the sandstone hills and subsequently deserted for a shorter course through rougher country. Green things filled the bottom of it and high, water-worn walls shut it in. It was weirdly quiet and uncannily remote. And if one peered behind the bushes that grew against its sides, one came upon hollow-sounding caves that Leviathan might have nested in, and saw small moss-grown cubbies ranged in rows from which mere minnows might once in safety have made faces at their enemies.

Broadway was like that.

One noticed that there were trees in Trinity Churchyard. One heard tugs puffing in the harbor. At the cavernous door of one of

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the great office buildings a shirt-sleeved janitor sat tilted back in a wooden chair. On the corner of Wall Street two policemen stood gossiping at the junction of their beats. A quartet of Italian girls with baskets on their arms hurried chattering toward the Battery wharfs on some picnic quest. And down the utterly deserted roadway from the north a single motor-cyclist came whirling unrebuked at forty miles an hour. The rest was sunshine and silence.

But, strange to say, the place had no air of a deserted city. It did not seem — as Fifth Avenue seems late at night, or as the Strand seems in the short hour of abandonment that comes to it before the dawn — a thing useless because unused, or lifeless because swept clean of human life. Deserted, it took on serenity. Unused, it developed meanings above

•

The "Taxi" Stand at Greeley Square



BROADWAY

its uses. It was not, as I would have supposed, an empty mart. It was become a temple from which the money changers had been driven out.

And later, as I crossed the Hudson and looked back at the fairy city that upreared itself against the morning, I quietly dropped overboard my cynic's similes and satiric symbols of interpretation.

I forget how many wonders of the world have been added to the classic seven. But I am certain that Lower Broadway has become the latest member of this Cyclopean family. From a feverishly busy street, whose inclosing rows of cast-iron and brown-stone façades fully served and adequately expressed the life that filled it, it has, before the uncomprehending eyes of a single generation and through the ragged stages of a Brobdingnagian

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growth, evolved into something at once independent of the men that made it and infinitely greater than the sum of all its parts. A few decades since, it was a congested thoroughfare in a large city. A few years ago, it was an uncoördinated congery of architectural high tumbling. To-day, a hundred-turreted whole, it towers to heaven in indissoluble solidarity.

Only the intensely passionate, basically vital, self-unconscious aspirations of mankind have thus uniquely phrased themselves in stone. The Egyptian passion for permanency was the architect of the Pyramids. The Greek passion for perfection built the Parthenon. The fiery faith of the Middle Ages flamed into the Gothic cathedrals. The as yet unself-cognizant passion of twentieth-century America has reared the skyline of Lower

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Broadway. It is not a by-product of our modernity. It is the self-forecasting monument of what we mean to be.

A Freak Racing Model near "the Circle"

VI



VI

ONE of the problems involved in always putting one's best foot forward is the difficulty of keeping one's worst foot always behind without involving the penalty of standing still.

Sleight-of-hand gentlemen, magicians, and wizards of sorts break this seeming deadlock by the simple trick of distracting the minds and deflecting the attention of their audience during the crucial moment required for the protruding of the cloven hoof; and Broadway, which we have seen to be no bungling amateur in prestidigitation, has worked out its own bit of by-play for covering its escape from this dilemma.

Our mothers, in their youth (your grand-

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mothers, my dears, if you happen to be well under thirty), did their shopping at Broadway and Chambers Street or in the fashion-haunted region round Canal. They found it an easy walk from their homes in Worth and Broome Streets, or, if they came of conservative stock and looked disdainfully upon that earlier Upper West Side, from their family mansions in Maiden Lane and John Street. But to-day, if you should do so strange and unlikely a thing as to walk resolutely north from where the City (as they would say in London) ends, — that is to say, from where St. Paul's Chapel turns its back upon the National Park Bank and has been forgotten for its pains, and where the Astor House, like a dejected old man, sits with its gray head sunk between its shabby shoulders and with a stubbly growth of tawdry shops beneath its chin, — you would

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scarcely have passed the sunken garden of the City Hall, where Justice, after holding her scales out in the face of Newspaper Row for a generation, recently fell overexhausted, before you 'd find yourself in an unknown region.

This is sometimes spoken of (there are always people who think to solve the riddle of the universe by mentioning the Nebular Hypothesis) as the Wholesale District. And it in so far justifies this appellation in the eyes of the uninitiated who wander into it that the show-rooms along its sidewalks seem full of things for sale by the gross that no conceivable human would ever think of buying by the piece,—the wire ghosts of misbegotten hats ; unlikely looking undergarments ; bolts of anæmic fabrics with hectic flushes on their unhealthy cheeks ; gardens of desperately artificial flowers ; exotic feathers from birds that

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never flew on land or sea ; strange cliques and sordid gatherings of tinsel trimmings, poisonous passementerie, impossible insertion and lank laces. And if you raise your eyes, signs are not wanting to suggest that the ten lost tribes of Israel have at last emerged from hiding.

From the south, men in search of card-index systems, typewriters, burglar-proof safes, firearms, and railroad transportation occasionally penetrate this region as far as Canal Street. From the north, women in search of bargains sometimes venture in as far as Astor Place. The intervening mile is *terra incognita*.

How does it come that, beyond a dim, first-class-in-history sort of notion that Niblo's Garden once stood on the corner of Prince Street, and that some one, we forget who, has told us that bridge prizes — or was it boys'

Up Broadway from Herald Square



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socks — were to be had for next to nothing at Charles Broadway Rouss's, and that both of these places were located somewhere in the hiatus between up town and down, we have but an instinctive, time-and-space conception of this district? It is owing to the fact that Broadway the Conjuror (in order to keep us from noticing that immediately behind that magnificently shod "best foot" that it puts so bravely forward trails a "worse foot," *mal chaussé* to the point of dilapidated uppers and protruding toes) has so arranged matters that between the City Hall and Fourteenth Street is where all New Yorkers who travel by the surface cars read the morning papers on their way downtown and the evening papers on their way back.

It was an old Hebrew patriarch who, by offering me a simple lesson in geography, first

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furnished me with a clue to the understanding of this motley middle region where Broadway, in its salad days, had been the Middle Road. I spied him from a car window — a fine old figure in a coat once black, but now gone green, with white beard and hair, and the far-focused, infinitely patient, yet remorseless eyes, that one always thinks of as belonging in the Sanhedrin, but only sees, nowadays, in the heads of occasional sellers of shoestrings or suspenders on the crowded sidewalks or among the teeming barrows of New York's East Side. And because, with no appearance of being on alien territory, he was walking down Broadway wheeling a baby-carriage filled with rolls of old matting and the rusted and broken remnants of a cook-stove, I jumped out and followed him.

He was a model for an old master; a study

Looking up Broadway from 39th Street



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for the stage ; a sight, one would have said, to stop the traffic. Yet none turned to look at him, and for blocks not so much as a cocked eyebrow or a crooked smile greeted his patient progress.

It has always been a matter for wonder to me that so few dwellers in modern Manhattan avail themselves of the privilege afforded them of making a tour of the world for ten cents. Any train on the Second Avenue Elevated will put you down at Rivington Street, in the heart of Russian Poland ; there are no octroi stations on the frontier of Hungary, a few blocks north ; and a short walk on Hester Street will bring you to the streets of Naples, from which it is equally easy to go east to China or south by west to Syria. But while I had thought that I knew my East Side like a book, as the phrase goes (shall we ever, I

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wonder, have a book as starkly human as the East Side?), I had unconsciously come to look upon it as a remote region, self-contained, bounded by the Bowery, and separated from the purlieus of Broadway by I knew not what buffer states of dignified commerce. And when my old patriarch, turning east on Prince Street, unexpectedly led me by a few short byways to a familiar junk-shop in Russian Jewry, I realized that not only had the world once again proved smaller than I thought it, but that in the heat of shrinking it had given off an explanation.

The amazing motley of Broadway from Canal Street north was, after all, nothing in itself. It was just the East Side showing through. It was simply the chemical discoloration of its retaining walls by the fermenting medley of mixed races that seethed and boiled behind

Broadway at Times Square



BROADWAY

them. And as I made my way back to it, I was busy picturing this strange street to myself as continuously throughout its length nothing in itself, but simply a sluiceway whose retaining walls were a succession of such seepings and discolorations. And as the picture grew and was filled in, as I realized that nowhere from the Battery to the Bronx, neither in the financial centre, nor in the wholesale district, nor in the jobbing regions, nor in the shopping quarter, nor in the theatre circle, nor in any of the successive hotbeds of great hotels, were the activities of the city mainly housed upon its sidewalks, I began to glimpse another of the elusive secrets of Broadway. I knew at last how it came about that to those who know it, Broadway is always seeming to hold the semblance of all things, yet ever proving to hold the substance of none; how,

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being everything by inference, it is yet nothing by actuality. I understood at last its inexhaustible capacity to be all things to all men while being forever unable to be everything to any man who is not either a local counter-jumper or a wastrel at large.

Nursemaids and Children at 106th Street

VII



VII

ONCE saw an Italian peasant woman, fresh landed from the steerage and dressed in all the fête-day regalia of her native province, chase a Broadway car for half a block in front of the Post-Office, and, catching up with it from behind when it stopped at Park Place, and failing to notice the entranceway for such cases made and provided, grasp the brake-handle of the rear platform, throw a sturdy, red-stockinged leg over the rail, and swing herself aboard with the satisfied air of having successfully surmounted the first difficulty of a new country.

Broadway smiled, collected her fare, and went on about its business. It does not, as a rule, impress one as having much time for foolishness.

BROADWAY

We often hear it stated that it is the longest, and the busiest, and the most spectacular, and the most spendthrift, and the most modern thoroughfare in the world. Sometimes the authors of these statements jump out at us like highwaymen, crying, “Your admiration or your life!” and pointing the declaration at us like a blunderbuss. Sometimes, like professional beggars, they ply us with persuasive details, hoping that we will drop an exclamation of wonder in their hats. They never tell us — perhaps they never noticed — that Broadway the spectacular and ultra-modern, the busy tender of a hundred irons in as many fires and the inconstant discarder of old loves for new affinities, is also in an unobtrusive sort of way something of a sentimentalist. Hidden in one of its many pockets it always has a crumbling four-leaved clover, a dying rose, or a fading

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ribbon that it shows occasionally to those who were its cronies during the progress of that particular affair. The fact that it never carries the same souvenir for long is another matter. Let those who think themselves entitled to do so, pass judgment on that.

Does any one know just when it was that the old woman who used to sell white rabbits with pink eyes at Easter-time, water-lilies in mid-June, and vari-colored puppies at other seasons, disappeared from her post between Nineteenth and Twentieth Streets on Broadway? With her has gone most of what surrounded her, and her going was perhaps the cue for those invisible scene-shifters whose work, unnoticed in the doing, is to dismantle the stage and prepare the new settings for the successive acts of Broadway's progressive comedy.

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For years, just south of the main doorway of Lord and Taylor's, she sat on some invisible support close to the ground. The shawl that bound her head and was pinned under her chin added its folds to the ample draperies of her comfortable skirts, and, blending with the brown iron walls behind her and the gray stone beneath, half enveloped and half revealed the clothes-basket or washtub that held her wares. From her ruddy face two cheery eyes looked out at a now vanished world of belles in bustles and gallants in "skin-tight" trousers, innocent of creases. There was no gasoline in the air she breathed; and all day long smart victorias and landaulettes and shiny carriages, with plum-colored liveries on the box and horses in jingly harness, drew up in front of her. And all that was middle-aged and fashionable and haughty, and all that was

Times Square — Rector's, Times Building, Hotel Astor



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young and gay and debonair, in the life of the city of the day, passed her unheeding at close range or stopped to laugh into each other's answering eyes while pretending to pet a puppy.

Does anybody know just when she disappeared?

Three blocks to her left the Fifth Avenue Hotel marked the boundary beyond which, unless it was to scuttle round the corner to a matinée at Palmer's Madison Square Theatre, no self-respecting female ever ventured to be seen. Park and Tilford's was near by; and Arnaud's, which had ministered to generations that knew not Huyler. Morrison's stood at her right hand. Gorham's glittered a few feet away. The sign of Cypher — cryptic name once fraught with half-mysterious suggestions of an esoteric cult for the antique —

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glowed up at her from the eastern corner of Seventeenth Street. Across from this, Jacques and Marcus decked their windows like the Queen of Sheba; while beyond Whiting's, Tiffany's hid its glories behind a dignified reserve and kept the southern gateway of its world against the barbarians of Fourteenth Street.

Does anybody know just when she disappeared?

Already there are thousands who pass the empty red-brick building at the Nineteenth-Street corner who do not know but that Gorham's was born and brought up at Thirty-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue. Already there are thousands to whom the names of Isaacs and of Simon on Tiffany's old iron building carries no hint of irony. Already deft putters-together of two and two, who happen to visit

In front of Hotel Astor



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the adjacent stretches of Fifth Avenue between twelve and one o'clock at noon, when they discover that what they had taken to be an international convention of labor-unions just adjourned or a mass meeting of the alien unemployed waiting to be called to order is nothing but a few of the clothing-factory and sweat-shop workers of the region taking the air and a cigarette after lunch, may think that they can read the fortune of near-by Broadway in the ten thousand bowler hats, the ten thousand wagging tongues, and the twenty thousand gesticulating hands of that assemblage.

And for the most part, even to the rest of us, the pathetic plight of this once palpitating stretch of highway, now plainly moribund, though still breathing the last gasps of its fashionable incarnation, is a negligible incident,

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even if noticed. For one of the many things that we Americans have as yet found no time to practice is the luxurious indulgence of regrets. We let the dead past bury its dead, if it be so minded ; or, more likely still, leave the ceremony to foreigners. And Broadway is the most insouciant of us all.

But sometimes, especially on wintry afternoons when hurrying faces are muffled in furs and the lights in the shop windows make brave play on such satins and jewels as are left, some of us feel a tug at our heartstrings in walking from Union Square to the Flatiron. And then, if we are quick to understand its sign language, we know that Broadway is telling us that it still remembers. And we realize that whatever new keepsake it may be cherishing the next time we share its confidence, for the present the blocks between Seven-

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teenth Street and Twenty-second are the sprig of rosemary that it is carrying — for remembrance.

Up Broadway from 113th Street

VIII



VIII

THE Japanese have an engaging legend about a company of blind men, who, happening for the first time upon an elephant, enthusiastically undertook to investigate the nature of the beast. One of them threw his arms about a hind leg. One of them got hold of its trunk. One of them, by standing on tip-toe, managed to grasp its tail. One borrowed a ladder and so got a grip on an odd ear. Subsequently they came to blows over discrepant conclusions.

Similarly, there are some field-naturalists who are thoroughly convinced that Broadway is a creature of exclusively nocturnal habits. Their observations, indefatigably prosecuted but ultra-specialized, have led them to believe

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that it lies up during the day, stirs and stretches itself languidly in the gloaming, and only rouses to full activity after dark. If, along about dusk, you find leisure to stand for a while on the little stone island of safety that lies between the headland of the Worth Monument and the promontory of the Flatiron and provides a port of refuge for timid navigators in those troubled waters, you will easily come to understand, perhaps for a time even to share, this erroneous but widely credited theory.

All afternoon the traffic of Twenty-third Street has fretted for the whistle or poured itself across Fifth Avenue ; the quadruple line of motor vehicles on the latter thoroughfare has alternately stopped and started at the busy crossing ; and the poor Broadway cars, almost unnoticed, have been content to make their

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way diagonally between, as occasion offered. Now there is a gradual dying-down of this confusion. Twenty-third Street is shutting up shop. Fifth Avenue is lighting its double row of close-set lights and going home to dinner. The Flatiron is becoming shadowy. At last the Metropolitan Tower, that for half an hour has been getting more and more like a great white ghost, calmly hangs its clock, full-moon-wise, in the east and lights its peaceful planet in the zenith. The show seems to be over for the day.

But as you, too, turn to leave, you notice in the north four hanging ropes of lights — so like the ropes of stars that parachute rockets let down when they burst, that you almost see them wave in the wind. And as you look, the lights become letters, and the letters form themselves into words, and the words are

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HOFFMAN and VICTORIA and CAFÉ MARTIN and BRESLIN. And below these fireworks and beyond them, you see a glare as of a conflagration, and hear a murmur like a County Fair. And then, "By George!" you say to yourself, "I believe the naturalists are right." And you follow the crowd.

Unhappily (can one draw out leviathan with a hook?) one cannot put that glowing spectacle into words, or paint the electric fairyland where, high above the happy crowd, huge white kittens wave exultant tails while tangling endless miles of crimson silk, and all the Kings and Queens of Table Waters hold their courts by sparkling fountains, and gigantic boxers deal each other phantom blows, and ghostly winds blow blazing skirts across the sky. One can only walk and look and tell one's self that after all Broadway begins at

Broadway at Columbus Circle



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Twenty-third Street and ends at Longenecker Square, and sleeps by day and comes to life at sundown; and that when, in daylight, we had thought it restlessly alive, all its grunts and twitchings were but dreams, and only proved that like a dog before the fire it was chasing rabbits in its sleep.

And yet it is not so many years ago that little knots of people used to gather nightly in newly christened Herald Square to watch the glowing eyes in the heads of the Herald owls wink solemnly at each minute as it crept by; and if you stopped and listened, you could hear little sighs of satisfaction go up from the watchers at each repetition of the miracle. In those days Broadway, while something of a somnambulist, was not considered a nocturnal animal. To-night, as you pass that way, you will see that even the fiery, hurtling

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horses of Ben Hur's chariot can only win passingly uplifted glances from the crowded sidewalks.

Whence comes this transformation? Has the leopard changed its spots? Is it true, as some would have it, that history is repeating itself with variations, and that the spirit of Imperial Rome has transmigrated into the American body politic? Or is it only that the dynamo has been perfected? Or that Psychology has turned advertising agent?

Believe me, it is something infinitely simpler and more natural. Have you ever extended your natural history studies to the firefly? If not, you probably regard it as a kind of entomological fluffy-ruffles that sleeps the clock around in order to go joy-riding by acetylene lanterns in the evening. As a matter of fact, it is a little, long, narrow, shabby,

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and somewhat awkward beetle, very busy about its everyday concerns by daylight. In its larval stage it shows faint glimmerings of phosphorescence on its body. Later, when the first promptings of passion stir its little veins, it flies, when its daily tasks are done, to hang its lamp of love above the meadow.

Broadway, too, is long, and narrow, and sometimes shabby, and always very busy in the daytime. In its larval stage it used to burn a little kerosene of evenings.

Lately it has come into its own.

The "Peanut Man," 116th Street

IX



THE "PEANUT MAN" 116th ST.

IX

LUKE BUSHEE was (and, if it please the Great Spirit, still is) a Chippewa Indian with a few drops of *coureurs de bois* blood in his copper veins, who lived near the shores of Lake Nepigon and drove the dryest of birch-bark canoes through the whitest water of that celestial wilderness. Luke's idea of a metropolis was a little village on the Canadian Pacific Railway which consisted of the railroad station, the agent's bungalow, a Hudson's Bay Company Post, a few shanties, and a place of occasional, and chiefly liquid, refreshment known as a hotel. Yet no cosmopolite, proud of his *savoir vivre*, whom I ever met and talked with, has shown a more instinctive knowledge of the formula for dining well on Broadway.

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It was on my first trip with Luke and we had been out some days. During the last of these there had been unmistakable signs in the air that the ice of aboriginal reserve was by the way of breaking up. And finally, under the influence of evening and a roaring fire, the last barriers gave way and Luke asked a question.

“You live in New York?”

“Yes, Luke.”

“You know Ba’tis’ Michell?”

“No, I don’t think I ever heard of him.”

Silence for several minutes. Then, with the subtle rising inflection of incredulity, —

“You live in New York?”

“Yes, Luke.”

“You not know Ba’tis’ Michell?”

“No, Luke ; I never heard of him.”

“Huh ! — tha’s funny.”

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And then, with the quiet satisfaction of one who convicts you out of your own mouth of arguing yourself unknown,—

“He ’s the cook at the hotel.”

Now when, in 1659, Martin Cregier built his tavern behind the fort, not to have known the cook at the hotel would indeed have argued one an obscure and inconsiderable citizen. Luke’s point of view can at least make us realize the human reality of New Amsterdam. But even though we laugh at the twentieth-century absurdity of it, it is not, perhaps, so far-fetched as it appears. There are still circles within which not to know *the* cook at *the* hotel is to confess one’s self a gastronomic philistine and a social outcast.

Snobbery? Not for a moment. Simple self-défense. How else shall most of us bear to

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see our brothers enjoying the delights that we have forfeited the ability to enjoy except by calling them names? Did not Father Adam, when he had been expelled from Eden and saw the animals still innocently disporting there, think for the first time to call them "brutes"? If you have inadvertently eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, only a pull will give you a good dinner on Broadway. You can dine there, yeomanly, for the price of a Bock—if you know where and have a nodding acquaintance with the man behind the lunch-counter. Or you can dine there, royally, for the price of a silk doublet—if you know where and send your card to your fellow sovereign behind the arras. See to it that it bears the arms of the United States and has a yellow back.

The Subway Station near the Ansonia, 72d Street



BROADWAY

Otherwise — well, otherwise you must have kept your curiosity unsated by the world, and have preserved the native innocence which believes that to pay is to receive, that fine ceilings make tender birds, and that, epicureanly speaking, the French can do no wrong, if you would not wander on Broadway at dinner-time like a Peri barred from Paradise.

Ah, yes, my dear sir, I can see what you are thinking by the quizzical angle of those little wrinkles at the corner of your eyes.

“Kissing and deviled kidneys,” you would tell me, “go by favor the world over.”

“It is not necessary,” you are saying to yourself, “to walk me past the Imperial and the Saint-Denis, Louis Martin’s and the Knickerbocker, Rector’s and the Hotel Astor, the Empire and the Marie Antoinette, the Ansonia and Breton Hall, in order to

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point out to me the tricks of trade that Broadway has borrowed from the world at large and performs more gorgeously than some, if more brazenly than most."

I know it perfectly, my dear fellow. And it is not for that that I ask you to glance in at all those happy faces,—something like three miles of them,—glowing with the joy of dreams come true, that evening and open windows display between Twenty-third Street and the upper Eighties. It is in order that, while they are still fresh in your recollection, I may whisper in your ear the truth about Broadway.

There used to be an old Frenchman who kept an unacknowledged restaurant in a lost corner of that part of Westchester County that is now the Borough of the Bronx; and a good many years ago two young men who

The Ansonia, Broadway and 72d Street





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had heard rumors of his Old-World manners and Gascon cooking, and who were at the age that seeks feverishly for adventures and fails to recognize them when found, devoted a college holiday to seeking him out.

At first, somewhat to their annoyance, he demurred at the idea of admitting them; explaining that he did not keep a place of public entertainment, but merely, on occasion, exercised his skill for the benefit of his acquaintances. In the end, however, possibly touched by the naïve disappointment and embarrassed silence of his visitors, he relented; and having ushered them into a sort of vine-grown arbor back of his house, he discussed most graciously with them the toothsome details of their meal. And he ended by saying, "And now, Messieurs, what will you have to drink?"

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As a matter of fact, they had not thought to drink at all. But they tried, with I fear a rather transparent show of offhandedness, to conceal this fact by saying that they would have — they thought — some — claret; and ended (after a carefully disguised consultation on the subject of finances) by ordering a bottle of a vintage that the old man commended in words as glowing as itself, and that cost (he somehow made the statement do duty at once as an apology and a diagnosis) six dollars the quart.

Ah! what a wine that was! One at least of those seekers after the unknown has since sampled many vintages in many lands; but never, since that old white-haired gentleman of France presented that dusty bottle, and wiped its lip with a sacrificial napkin, has authentic nectar passed his lips!

An Oriental Bit — First Baptist Church at 79th Street



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Well, the meal was eaten and the wine was drunk and the attentive host, with a “L’addition, Messieurs? Bien, Messieurs,” placed a slip of paper on the table before the feasters. One of them read it, looked puzzled, flushed crimson, and passed it to his friend. He read it, looked puzzled, flushed crimson, and passed it back. It read as follows:—

Two lunches @ \$1.00	\$2.00
One Btl. Claret	.75
	\$2.75

I’m not certain, but I believe that explanations were demanded by youthful dignity, offended and up in arms; explanations that the kindly smile in those keen old eyes should have rendered needless. I know at any rate that it was years before the recollection of that *dénouement* ceased to have a

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sting and became, as it deserved, a happy and revealing memory. But that was long ago. Since then I have many times, in spirit, made reparation and apology. And when, as sometimes happens, I dine at the latest gold-and-crystal Valhalla on Broadway (where perhaps Ba'tis' Michell — not yet, alas, one of my acquaintances — may be the cook), I think of that old Frenchman as I look about me at the feasters and I know that Broadway is not a robber of the guileless and a passer-off of spurious wares upon the unwary. It is smilingly giving to its children glimpses of their hearts' desires. Only it is wiser in its generation than the old Frenchman. It does not give its trick away. It charges them for what they think they get.

The 135th Street End of the "Dip," starting at 120th Street

X



X

I^N the heart of a mountain forest (from a convenient crotch in a big pine tree) I once saw a huge grizzly saunter majestically along a dim path in the dusk.

I was a good twenty feet from the ground and the wind blew my scent too high over his head for my nearness to alarm him by apprising his alert nostrils of my presence. At the same time my elevation enabled me to see, approaching along the converging line of a well-marked trail, a younger bear of a decidedly cocky cast of countenance and evidently out for an evening's pleasure.

They met at the junction and the younger animal, evidently thinking that he had the right of way, attempted — with a friendly air

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that seemed to say, "Why, hello, grandpa!" — to share the going with the intruder. But the latter, while never for a moment abating his dignity, and never, so far as I could see, breaking his even and deliberate stride, raised a lightning-quick forepaw, gave a short, raucous growl, and went on his even way—alone.

If you follow up Broadway from where it starts a garden at Columbus Circle ; past its noisy crossing of Columbus Avenue at Sixty-sixth Street ; past the little subway kiosk and the towering hotel turrets at Seventy-second Street ; past where it finally abandons its fad for the automobile business at Eighty-sixth Street ; up a hill to Ninety-second Street and down to the "bench" below, you will come to where the little village of Bloomingdale once stood and to where, at One Hundred Third Street, the Bloomingdale Road, hav-

At 104th Street



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ing fulfilled its mission, came to peaceful end.

The resting-place of both is marked by little epitaphs on the near-by lamp-posts which read "Bloomingdale Square."

Here, too, from the south, young West End Avenue runs in, lined with perky residences and innocently bent upon its youthful business. But you will search for it in vain toward the north. Bloomingdale Square is where cocky little West End Avenue met Grandpa Bear.

There are a few blocks in the One Hundred Thirties and Forties where it looks as though Broadway had once paused to dream a bourgeois dream. It had, perhaps, a momentary notion of giving over its gay bachelor existence and becoming, in an unobtrusive way, a householder; of marrying and settling down.

BROADWAY

It built itself some rows of six-story brownstone flats, opened drug stores at convenient corners, induced greengrocers and delicatessen gentlemen to come and minister to its needs, and prepared to cultivate domesticity and raise a family.

But it soon tired of the experiment. Possibly it was only the indulgence of a passing weariness. Possibly, as the art critics say of similar technical divagations on the part of their heroes, it simply "fell, for a time, under the influence of Amsterdam Avenue."

At any rate, this half-mile of home-spun lies along its hilltop, a peaceful point of vantage from which to look back upon the splendid burst of energy that carried the great highway from Cathedral Heights and the clustered domes of Columbia University, down, down, down, to the river level of Manhattan

The Park on Broadway at 106th Street



BROADWAY

Street, and up, up, up, the slope beyond. It offers, too, a convenient criterion of contrast by which to judge the joy of recovered freedom with which Broadway goes galumphing downhill and up again toward the open ; shaking itself as it goes and tossing up huge piles of big apartments for the pure love of using surplus energy.

They say it ends at Albany.

But let us no longer suffer from the purblindness of ancestral habit. Broadway occasionally lies low, like Brer' Rabbit. But it never ends. Albany? Why, I myself know a place in Minnesota where it crops out for a mile or so. And I once landed for a few hours on the beach of an Alaskan fiord where two weeks before, so I was assured by the oldest inhabitant of the city that I found there, nothing but untrodden tundra and desolation

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was to be seen. At the moment, however, there were a frame gambling resort, a hotel like a gospel tent, and over two thousand inhabitants living under canvas and dreaming golden dreams. The hotel stood on a corner and displayed a sign that read

ALL DRINKS ONE DOLLAR

In front of it stood a lamp-post with a half-burned candle in its lantern. And under the lantern two box-slats had been nailed cross-wise. And on one was painted

TWENTY-THIRD STREET

and on the other was painted

BROADWAY

Albany? Nonsense! The last time I saw it Broadway was headed for the Pole.

A Castle between Broadway and the Hudson — 193d Street



XI



XI

THERE is a widespread notion that in the matter of a man's age there is no going back of his birth-certificate. But no observant person who has ever been made to feel his own ignorant immaturity by looking into the wise, patient, disillusioned eyes of some babies, or who has had his own premature senility brought home to him by the child-like joy and trustfulness in some octogenarian faces, really takes any great stock in this popular superstition.

Indeed, that very public, which insists upon holding other people to their birth-certificates, is individually given to declaring on occasion that "a man is as old as he feels." Some poetic philosopher puts it that "age is

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measured by our lost ideals and not by the flight of time." And even the physiologist, translating the proletarian's horse sense and the poet's rhapsody into his own language, declares that "a man is as old as his arteries."

It is the same with communities. I call to mind a village of some two hundred inhabitants—a very baby of a village, judged by the date on its certificate of incorporation—that was born and baptized some sixty years ago when its home State was a young mother proud of many such children. Great things were prophesied for it when it should grow up and become a city. Its streets were laid out one hundred feet wide. Hills guarded and beautified it. A stream circled it and ran its mills. It had a red-brick school, pretty houses bowered in pines, a smithy, a Ma-

A Suggestion of Spain from 109th Street



BROADWAY

sonic Hall, a stage-line, two stores, and a future.

But when the railroads arrived, they passed it by on either side; and when the Civil War came, it called all its men to the front and sent most of them back with pensions. And now, for forty years, these grizzling veterans have foregathered daily at that one of the two stores that happened to be the Post-Office, while their wives milked the cows and hoed the gardens. And the hundred-foot-wide arteries of the trade that was to be have hardened until the building of a chicken coop calls for (and receives) the presence and encouragement of every red corpuscle in the community.

By rights that village ought to be teething. As a matter of biological fact, it is ossified with old age.

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It is therefore evident that the age of New York is not only a determining factor in its character, but is not necessarily a matter of chronology. The parish register gives its birthday as May 26, 1626. Any competent physician who notes the unimpaired elasticity of its femoral artery, the unhesitating ease with which the half-worn cells of its retaining walls are replaced, and new tissues supplied at need, will certify that it is under thirty. Let us see if we cannot get a line of our own on this interesting question.

A few years ago, in excavating for the foundations of the Bowling Green Offices, which occupy the lots numbered from five to eleven Broadway, the workmen uncovered what experts and antiquarians declared to be a part of the wooden palisade that had protected the rear of the Dutch fort of New

*Doctor Mulvey's Dog and Cat Hospital—A Relic,
at Cathedral Parkway*



BROADWAY

Amsterdam. Experts have, before now, been known to err in diagnosis and even antiquarians are human; so that doubtless the most prudent thing to do in the matter of this exhumed fence is, metaphorically speaking, to sit on it. But its alleged discovery has a bearing, not at all archæological, on the age of Broadway.

The fact of the discovery was rather widely noted by the press. Yet to the average New Yorker, who saw it mentioned in his morning paper, and to whom a reported discovery of Roman relics in the sub-soil of the Strand, or of the body of another Pharaoh in the sands of Egypt would have seemed but a commonplace of historical continuity, this reported survival of a few posts and palings from the nearby time of Dutch highboys and Jacobean furniture either looked like a bare-

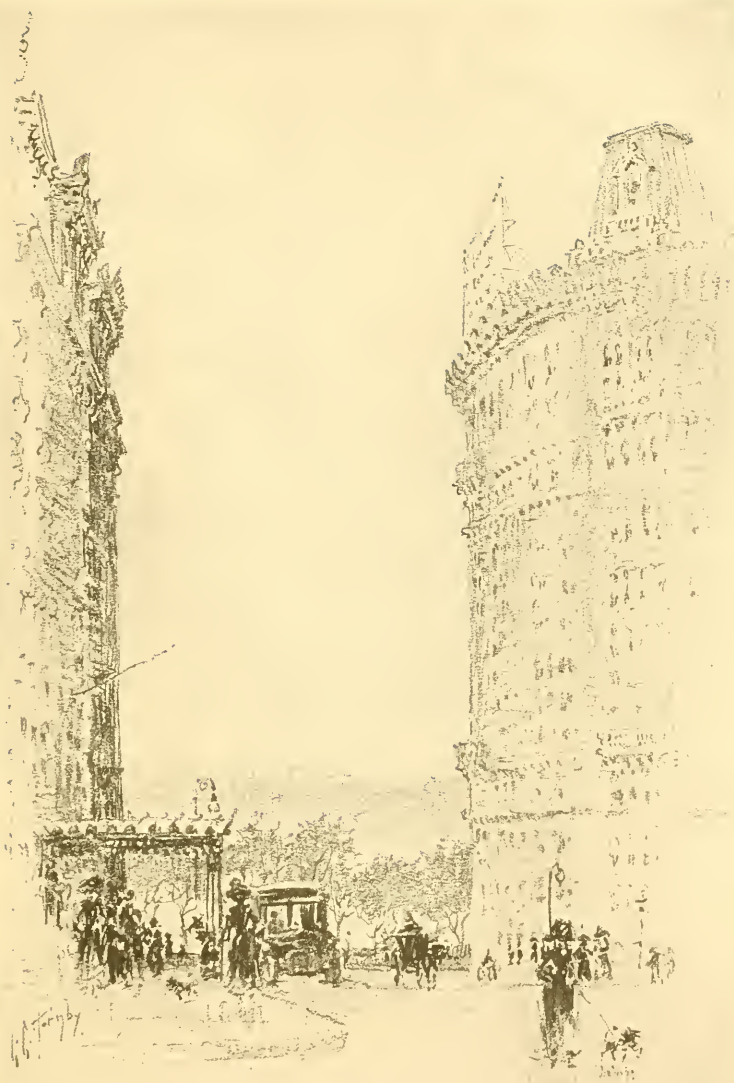
BROADWAY

faced attempt to materialize a legend — like claiming, let us say, to discover in the Roman Forum the bones of the wolf that suckled Romulus, — or else appeared to relate itself to the timeless eras of geology.

In short, it was like showing a bit of his own baby-clothes to a youth of twenty-one; to whom his great grandmother's sampler appears a mildly interesting and perfectly normal family possession, but to whom a three-inch red-leather shoe in connection with himself is either incredible or antediluvian.

All of us who have gotten over being twenty-one, and have preserved any recollection of what the experience was like, remember that it was a time when the Future, about which we had been openly curious and secretly a trifle afraid, became suddenly negligible on account of our new-found and com-

Looking across the Hudson from Broadway at 116th Street



BROADWAY

plete self-confidence in regard to it. Also that it was a time when our childhood (an indiscretion that we had never quite lived down) all at once receded into an unplumbable abyssm of antiquity. Also that it was a time when, finding that the blundering old fogeyism of our elders had somehow clarified into wisdom in our own noddles, we were gloriously enabled to forge along, deep wrapped in the supreme interest of to-day, letting yesterday go hang and to-morrow look out for itself. It was a time when we expected, presently, to reform the world, and, meanwhile, took our own shortcomings lightly. It was a time when we looked disdainfully upon the amenities of life, yet carried our heads high and parted our hair carefully in the middle. It was a time when we did crude things boastfully and fine things without thought.

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How shall we understand Broadway (or the city that it bisects or the nation that it epitomizes) if we do not, remembering these things, see that for all its three hundred years of history it is just turned twenty-one?

They tell us that the world is old and that Great Pan is dead. Do not you believe them. The world is still fecund. And Pan is not dead; he has merely moved to town. It is true that out in the country, these days, there is no one left but a few dryads and an occasional satyr. But if, along Broadway, you will watch warily among the crowds, some day you will see a footprint that you do not know. Look at it as a Mussulman looks upon the sandal of Mahomet. It is as near as you will ever come to seeing Pan-America, the lustiest of the younger gods.

Columbia College from Broadway



11/11/11

Off to Albany

XII



XII

EVEN on the clearest night in summer, if you stand on the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street it is impossible to see the stars.

May it not be salutary for us to remember, at times, that Broadway itself is probably invisible to, say, the keenest observers on the satellites of Sirius?

Mr. Chesterton, who is fond of exploding bits of unexpected truths so that they sound like hyperbolic blank cartridges, has said somewhere that in all the relations of life, the only thing that really matters is a man's attitude toward the cosmos.

A pale-faced man, stretched on a cot in one

BROADWAY

of the city hospitals, to whom the chaplain of the ward had just been speaking, once said to me, "You can say what you like, but heaven is a long way from Broadway."

On the other hand, a certain citizen of Gotham died and was buried.

And, at first, when he came confusedly to himself, his senses were obfuscated with the notion that he must, once again, have been making a night of it.

But when the eyes of his spirit began to clear, he saw that he was in a strange country: And as he looked about him his gaze fell upon an open doorway. And within he saw a Being, surrounded by strange instruments, gazing into what might have been a microscope.

And he said to the Being, "What are you doing?"

And the Being answered, "I am seeking."

A Relic of Old Broadway near 192d Street





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And he said, “For what?”

And the Being answered, “God knows.”

And when the newcomer had thought on this for a moment he said, “Why, then, do you seek?”

And the Being answered, “There is nothing else to do.”

At that the stranger made bold to enter the doorway and to ask, less hesitatingly, “What are you looking at?”

And the Being answered, “At a drop of juice from the body of a bug.”

And he asked, “Is it a rare bug?”

And the Being answered, “Its numbers are a pest.”

And he asked, “Where did you get it?”

And the Being answered, “From the stalk of a weed in my kitchen-garden.” And he added, “Come and look.”

BROADWAY

And when the stranger had looked into the lens, he saw the sun and the stars and all the uncounted orbs of heaven, very small and scarcely to be made out, moving in a crystal liquor. And, bewildered, he asked, "What is it?"

And the Being answered, "The leucocytes in the blood of the bug."

And the newcomer, when he had looked again into the lens, raised his head and said, in an awe-stricken voice, "Are you, then,—GOD?"

And the Being laughed outright and said, "I am but a poor Being like the rest of my race, who knows not whence he came, or whither he is going, or if God lives."

And when he had pondered this, he that had been a citizen of Gotham said to himself, "If these things be so; if the earth and her

The "Frankfurter Man"



BROADWAY

sister-planets, the sun, the dog star and their myriad brothers of the Milky Way, are but corpuscles in the blood of an unconsidered insect from a neglected corner of the kitchen-garden of a Being who himself knows neither whence he came nor whither he is bound nor if God lives, is it not possible that sometimes, on Broadway, we took ourselves too seriously?"

THE END

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